Cleveland Goes Modern

Design for the Home 1930-1970

Nina Freedlander Gibans

Cleveland Goes Modern: an exhibit of modern single family housing from 1930-1970. A first look at mid-century architectural history.

Modern Comes to Cleveland.

In 1930, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and his then fellow architectural historian Philip Johnson, anxious to bring European modernism to America, published their seminal work, "The International Style". In 1932, expanding on this mission, they co-curated an exhibit, Modern Architecture; International Exhibition that was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, where Philip Johnson was Curator of Architecture. Not only did it show New Yorkers what significant design changes were occurring in Europe, it extended its significance by traveling beyond the east coast. Institutions subscribing to show the exhibition came from Hartford, Los Angeles, Cambridge, Boston, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Rochester, Worchester, Buffalo and three from Ohio: Cincinnati, Toledo and Cleveland. Notes to William Mathewson Milliken, Director of the Cleveland Museum of Art, document its presence in Johnson's hometown in October, 1932 at the Museum. (Archives, Cleveland Museum of Art) Philip Johnson's father, Homer Johnson, attorney for John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company, was one of the members of MOMA's small Exhibitions Committee of eight, which also included Alfred H. Barr, Jr. (Director of MOMA), W.W. Norton, publisher, and Lewis Mumford, architecture and social critic. Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was Treasurer of the Board of Trustees of MOMA at the time. Joseph Ceruti, AIA (1912-1993), Cleveland architect writes in his "Recollections of Architects and Architecture in Cleveland, Ohio (1993)" "The depression era of the 1930s saw profound effects in architecture, including a decline in the number of practicing architects and the arrival of Modernism stemming from the European International Style"

The midwest patrons of the traveling exhibition became well indoctrinated on the history, extent, examples and vocabulary of modern architecture. They learned to appreciate new uses of materials, new allocations of space, new possibilities for site development. From Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House, Chicago, they could see his new ideas: what he meant by glass as a super-material; tenuity, a new standard means, the nature of materials, and the importance of pattern synthesized in a new integrity — a sense of the within as reality. [1]

From Walter Gropius they could learn the application of modern methods of construction to the dwelling house - the use of concrete, brick and the aesthetic possibilities of modern architecture in minimal building. "As the formulator at the Bauhaus of a resolutely modern system of artistic education and the first Post-War leader in the field of minimal housing, Gropius' accomplishments have more social significance than those of any other modern architect." [2]

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe worked as an assistant in the office of Peter Behrens, where Gropius was working. It is to his practical work in this office that Mies owes the completion of his architectural education. In 1930, he becomes the Director of the Bauhaus that was founded by Gropius. The New York exhibition showed his luxurious modern house at Brno, Czechoslovakia where he implements his concept of the "open plan." [3] According to Johnson, Mies was concerned with the feeling of space and the qualities of the planes that divide the space. He favored quality materials - marble, plate glass, both translucent and clear, silk and velvet curtains, various woods. He thought of the outside of the house as part of the inside, the interiors of which are rich, simple, and on a grand scale.

George Howe, widely traveled and persuaded by art history teachings of the importance of structure and function in Gothic architecture, approached modern architecture by looking at the way planning, construction and aesthetic design are interdependent. In partnership with the younger Swiss architect William Lescaze, he designed the Philadelphia Society for Savings headquarters building, completed in 1932, the first true international style skyscraper in the United States and an icon for the generation of modern architects emerging in the '30s.

The mention of these exemplary architects from the 1932 exhibition on modern architecture lays the groundwork for Cleveland's entry into the conversation. Among our Cleveland architects trained at Harvard (Gropius) and the Illinois Institute of Technology (Mies van der Rohe) are those who were educated by these icons of the profession, who had emigrated from Germany to America when Hitler's displeasure at modern architecture and arts forced the closing of the Bauhaus. (George Howe was to lead the Yale School of Architecture from 1950-54 – too late to affect the Cleveland architects under consideration here.) Of course there are other influences, but at any of the Schools of Architecture, the 1932 exhibit was a benchmark. Not unlike the Armory Show in New York in 1913 for artists, it is the moment when European work was introduced to Americans. And, in the wisdom of the curators trying to spread the word, it then traveled to 10 cities, Cleveland among them.

Before World War II, architecture was an elitist profession in Cleveland, dominated by a small number of large firms who hired mostly graduates from the architecture schools. By 1890, when the Cleveland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was founded, 36 architects were listed in the Cleveland directory. In the 1890s architects of national reputation were hired to design the important buildings and public spaces. Daniel Burnham, John M. Carrere and Arnold Bruner of Chicago, who together designed

Cleveland's Group Plan of 1905, is just one example. There were many others. Charles Schweinfurth (1856-1919), trained in New York, was the first Cleveland architect to rank up there with them. He came to design churches and mansions for the wealthy. A few Cleveland architects brought back with them the teachings of their studies at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

1921 was an important year, when the Cleveland School of Architecture was established with Abram Garfield as President. The school was affiliated with Western Reserve University from 1929-1972. In addition, there were some institutions offering architectural training part time. John Huntington offered a variety of courses –art, architecture and engineering - with "top-notch faculty" from Western Resrve University, Case and the Cleveland School of Art, providing an alternative opportunity @ $5.00 a semester. (If you attended 80% of the classes, the $5.00 was returned.) [4] Since 1972, however, there has been no accredited professional school at any price in Cleveland. The Kent State University School of Architecture and Environmental Design, one of four in the state, has been the closest professional training facility.

Between 1895-1939, the area saw the development of several upscale suburbs using talented local architects. The best of those were Lakewood, Bratenahl, and Cleveland Heights, suburbs where the well-to-do lived in eclectic-styled houses designed by architects such as Meade and Hamilton, Abram Garfield, Philip Small, Charles Schneider, Clarence Mack, Munro Copper and Antonio di Nardo. Shaker Heights (1906-1930) represented the planned vision of the powerful van Sweringen brothers, with housing set along curved roads, designated spaces for schools, churches, parks and golf courses. The housing designs were monitored for exterior style, materials and colors. All of the designs in these suburbs reflected the taste and extensive travels of Cleveland's power elite at the time.

The firm of Walker and Weeks is perhaps best known for their public buildings like the Main Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, the Federal Reserve Bank, Severance Hall - the best Beaux Arts buildings imaginable. They were also influential in the design of further suburbs like Gates Mills, where Frank Walker lived and governed as Mayor and during whose governance aesthetic policies were put in place. Even the most popular architectural firms were affected by the 1929 crash, so by the mid 1930s, the era of the Depression and the introduction of modern architectural ideas to Cleveland, the Walker and Weeks office had collapsed. The architects who had worked there had become restless designers, hungry for new ideas and some business.

The kernel of the idea for one of our earliest modern houses may well have developed from the 1932 MOMA-CMA exhibit of Modern Architecture. Charlotte Young, who worked briefly for the Cleveland Museum of Art, and her husband Kenneth Bates, initially commissioned it in 1936 and later redesigned it when she married Kenneth Bates, the premier enamellist for most of the century at the Cleveland School (Institute) of Art, commissioned architect Alfred Clauss to design their home, which was completed in before 1935-1936.when it was completed Alfred Clauss, the architect, had initially been recommended to Philip Johnson by Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe to supervise his apartment in New York City. Clauss was born in Munich, Germany, emigrated to the United States in

1930, and worked initially for George Howe in Philadelphia. He met his future partner George Daub there in Cleveland. Philip Johnson persuaded his father to use his influence on behalf of Clauss and Daub in obtaining a commission from Standard Oil of Ohio for a filling station to be done in the International Style. [5]. The station design is described as a small structure similar to the Barcelona Pavilion (Mies van der Rohe, 1929) with a roof cantilevered beyond the columns to the eave-line where a glass wall enclosed the building. The Bates house, still owned by the Bates family, sits on the shores of Lake Erie, intact. Everything has been preserved as designed, including the furnishings designed with the house. It is clearly International style. Clauss, who maintained an association with Johnson over 50 years, can now be seen as a formative architect in the beginning of this new era of architectural design.

The Break with Walker and Weeks: the Early Modernists.

J. Byers Hays, FAIA, (1891-1968; active in Cleveland 1920-1963) worked in New York for Raymond Hood, one of the architects whose work was exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art's *Modern Architecture* exhibition of 1932. Hays came to Cleveland in 1920 to work with Walker and Weeks as their chief designer. His own house, built on Delamere Rd. in Cleveland Heights in 1924, is quite traditional and in contrast to homes he would later design in the mid-30s on Severn Rd. and Derbyshire Rd. in the same suburb. He broke with Walker and Weeks in the wake of the crash and set up his own office with Russell Simpson, also from Walker and Weeks. He is an architect who is remembered by those who knew him or worked with him as a man of many talents. Notable aside from his architectural talent is his ability to draw - especially his pen and ink drawings, and his penchant for good discussions about architectural theory with his peers.

Architects who worked for him over parts of his long career here remember him well as the one who led us into the modern era in Cleveland. George Dalton, AIA, who knew him in those early days, feels that he was an important voice for modern architecture and had perhaps the earliest impact here. As a young architect, Dalton visited Hays in his office many afternoons to chat about architecture. (There was little work so plenty of time to theorize as well as to enter many competitions.) "He was the first person to advance the cause of non-classical architecture." This was at a time in the mid-thirties when the Western Reserve School of Architecture was still teaching "old school" (i.e., Ecole des Beaux Arts) architecture. "Byers gave me new approaches and new ideas." John Bonebrake, AIA who worked with Hays agrees with Dalton's feelings. Hays designed two of the earliest modern houses in the Cleveland area – twin flat-roofed houses in Cleveland Heights – built for Theodore Frech, Superintendent of General Electric's Nela Park, the first industrial research park.[6] Around the same time, Hays and his partner entered and won a national competition sponsored by General Electric for a model small house ($6,000-7,500) that would showcase G.E.'s new electrical equipment. [7]

> "Three months ago, General Electric Company invited every architect, engineer, draftsman, and designer in the U.S. to submit plans for two types of houses in a $21,000 prize contest. Result: the greatest single collection of architects' drawings (2,100) assembled since Depression logjammed the housing industry. Last week, the drawings suspended from wires like baby

> diapers on a laundry line were put on display for a jury in General Electric's Manhattan Building.
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> The jury of eleven (architects, an engineer, a realtor, and a professional woman) inspected each plan for a small house ($6,000-$7,500) for a family of three, a medium-sized house ($10,000-$20,000) for a family of four. They awarded the grand prize in the first group to a drawing of a modern flat-roofed home by Hays and Simpson of Cleveland, the grand prize in the second group to a California ranch-type house by Paul Schweikher and Theodore Warren Lamb of Chicago. General Electric plans to turn these drawings and ten other prize winners over to real estate dealers to build 400 houses for which G.E. will presumably supply electrical equipment."

Robert Madison tells the important story of his neighbor J. Byers Hays, a humanitarian and staunch believer in diverse neighborhoods. Byers Hays almost single handedly changed the attitude of a biased neighborhood to one that welcomed blacks when Madison built two homes – one for himself – on North Park Boulevard in Cleveland Heights in 1960. [8]

Others of the early modernists that had worked for Walker and Weeks included Harold Burdick, whose own cubist brick and glass block 1938 residence in Cleveland Heights is full-blown international style, although its furnishings were traditional. (One can speculate that its diminutive size and Burdick's original traditional furnishings were more likely due to lack of funds than by design during this depressed era.) Other homes he designed in Shaker Heights would be more generous in size and lean towards more traditional idioms and scale (Shaker Heights at the time would not permit modern house designs.) .

Architect George Mayer's 1939 modern home designed for Jack Lang on Andrews Rd. in Cleveland Heights was brought to our attention by the description by the many people who called it "amazing". That description is more apt for the "art moderne" interior design and ornament than the somewhat traditional exterior composition. It has vitrolite (glass) paneled master bathrooms and copper lighting fixtures and railings. It was featured in a December, 1940 issue of Architectural Forum and in a recent HGTV television program. Mayer had previously worked with renowned sacred building architect Charles Greco on The Temple at E. 105th St. and Chester Ave., and for Sigmund Braverman, architect of the landmark modern apartment building at Euclid Heights Blvd. and Kenilworth Rd in Cleveland Heights. He designed several more traditional homes.

James Rideout is the enlightened developer who invited Ernst Payer (1904-1981) to join him in Cleveland when he wanted to enhance his firm's areas of expertise. Trained in Europe (under Josef Hoffman in Vienna) and at Harvard with Gropius at the helm, Payer had already been identified as one of the architects under 40 to watch. Attention had been given to a house he designed in Montclair, N.J. when he was still working on the east coast. Rideout was already developing a special enclave of five homes on South Lane in Moreland Hills in the early 1940s. Among those beside himself who lived there were George Dalton, AIA (1947) and forward-looking structural engineer Richard Gensert.

Later, Ralph and Harriet Gibbon would join them in a home designed by Neal Guda, AIA, for Flynn Dalton and van Dijk (1970).

The Two Gropius Disciples:

European-born and bred, Vienna and Harvard (Gropius) in America trained, Ernst Payer is clearly one of Cleveland's most important early modern architects. A spiral-bound but unpublished manuscript, *A Career in Architecture: The Ernst Payer Approach*, documents this productive career with emphasis on his contribution to single family residential architecture. [9] His public buildings throughout Cleveland are an important part of his legacy, including the Medusa Portland Cement Co. corporate headquarters in Cleveland Heights, his public libraries in Cleveland, Cleveland Heights and Orange and the Crawford Aviation and Auto Museum at the Western Reserve Historical Society. Since we are focused here on housing, we drove, searched, found and visited many houses worthy of discussion. Payer's own home proved to be the best and most carefully preserved as designed, with original details intact such as the bathroom with ceramic tiles designed by Leza McVey, original draperies and furnishings (including fabrics selected by his wife Dorothy Shephard, Curator of Textiles at The Cleveland Museum of Art. The families of the CEOs of The Taylor Chair Co., now over 100 years old, were his first clients in Cleveland. Other clients in the post-war period were among Cleveland's next generation of leaders in medicine, business, and cultural affairs. His sites were magnificent and he carefully placed the houses to take advantage of their spectacular vistas or site features. The houses were often well concealed from the street down long winding drives through native woodlands, and were well worth our hunt through Waite Hill, Moreland Hills, and Bentlyville. His houses ranged in size, with both size and quality growing over these years. Common among almost all of them are the large expanses of glass in major rooms overlooking the view and the bris soleil over those glazed openings to protect the interiors from the sun. The homeowners all knew and treasured what they owned, whether they were the original or current owners.

But it is Payer's enormous ego, his aggressive and articulate self, his distinctive speeches before the likes of illuminating and landscape societies, his forward-looking use of glass, lighting, contemporary interior design, and his inclusion of such work of his in the ads, articles and photographs in magazines on lighting, electricity and building materials that made him stand out even more from his peers. In the very complete scrapbook of his work (lent to us by his son), he never lets us forget that these are his buildings as he is found reading in the living room, sitting on a mound of dirt with the owner or standing with a set of plans. As can be expected, his style developed from his near-traditional look of his early years here to an increasingly more contemporary sweep in his maturity and highly successful later years. In many of his earlier houses, the interior plans had been significantly altered, but his own house and the house for Ray Armington remain intact.

The other outstanding star of the post-war period in Cleveland was Robert A. Little, FAIA. A video production has been produced about Robert Little's dream for the Pepper Ridge community of modern (mostly Little-designed) homes. Shortly after his death in 2005,those who had worked with him gathered together in the Little home to discuss what it was like

to work for and with this brilliantly talented architect-artist. Little (descendent of Paul Revere) came to Cleveland with his wife Ann Halle Crile, whom he met in Gropius' classes at Harvard's School of Architecture. The two of them decided to see if they could gather friends around Robert's idea for a planned community of modern homes suited to their various lifestyles. With Seth and Franny Taft, they succeeded in finding land free of the van Sweringen-type architectural constraints and fought their way in Pepper Pike City Hall to achieve the street design, house designs, flat roof configurations and even the addresses they wanted. Little was famous for his wonderful drawings of what was to happen in a dwelling for the children, the adults, and also for the animals – the separate zones and the common zones. The siting of the house was of major importance to him, for the house needed to take advantage of the movement of the sun for energy conservation, heating and cooling, summer and winter comfort. Little was inventive (the Solux energy machine), creative (the signage for mailboxes and addresses), talented (watercolors and drawings for almost everything) and fun. His participation in Pepper Ridge's community events included judging food sculpture competitions that traditionally followed two days of intergenerational foot races, swimming, tennis, and preceding the picnic and bonfire on Labor Day. Many of the original families still inhabit their homes and their offspring and friends have been returning for work and play on this Labor Day weekend for more than 50 years.

Little's booming voice was a gatherer, his office behaviors and humanitarianism memorable. He was aggressive and managed to be published widely in major popular magazines, on the covers and in articles that "advertised" his designs throughout the land. An example is his design for "The House for all America, to be built in 100 communities throughout the country." We are still looking for examples, although we know they were built coast to coast (with minor variations to adapt to the climate and milieu. He was interested in new materials and in integrating exterior and interior design and furnishings. His architect peers saw him as a mentor, leader and loved his red scarf, open-convertible style as he went through the city. (Robert Little "Second Love" and Frances Taft "Folk Tales of Pepper Ridge" Nos. I and II) (NFG videotaping, interviews and discussions held throughout 2006)

Houses Little and Payer built are among the oldest still inhabited by the original families or their children. In the case of Gates Mills clients Bobby and Frank Griesinger's home, Little got to review and approve the energy-saving renovations undertaken in recent years by Peter Griesinger, their son, who now owns and occupies it with the same affection his parents held for it.

Clevelander Victoria Ball's book on Interior Design (1960) uses several of both architects' homes as exemplars, as she chronicles how contemporary planning ties inside and nature and how such design ideas as the flow of interior spaces, dedicated children's and adult areas, and other open planning concepts have revolutionized the design of the modern home.

The Architect's Own Residence.

The architects have always seen the opportunity to design their own house as a special opportunity. Then, as at almost no other time, they can use the materials they desire, experiment with new technology, and mold it's form, space and details aesthetically to their wishes and needs. Their house becomes their most personal statement of their beliefs in architectural design. Usually money is the main barrier to the complete fulfillment of their dream house. (We previously took note of that in reference to Harold Burdick's own 1938 house in Cleveland Heights.)

In the post-war period, George Dalton was the earliest example when he built his own 1947 home in the first architect-designed modern "community" developed by James Rideout on South Lane; Carl Droppers and Don Hisaka in 1965, Stephen Bucchieri in 1968, and Richard Fleischman in 1969 designed their own homes that represented the same ideal. Houses that Ernst Payer and Robert Little did for themselves in the 50s were true representations of their dreams. Fortunately, they have been preserved as designed, so we can appreciate their intentions. Such is not often the case, as new owners find the need to update the amenities – some with great sensitivity to the original, others less so.

Carl Droppers was not known for his forward-looking aesthetic when he taught at the Architecture School at CWRU, but when it came to his own house above the Berea Reservation, it was a modern gem that he has lived in for 40 years. He described showcasing two of his favorite structural ideas: the cantilever as structural tour-de-force which"could provide a covered area without visible means of support." The other was the Vierendeel Truss or open-web girder structure without diagonals that permitted large squared openings. He invited his dubious neighbors over to see it when it was completed. One person commented that the huge glass panels in the living room facing the ravine and the extraordinary wooded site allowed a "change of wallpaper every hour".

Architecture and Technology

Carl Droppers also worked as a consultant to the G.E. Lighting Institute at Nela Park under Wilbur Riddle and designed several houses with him utilizing the latest in electrical technology – such as one of the first houses with all low-voltage lighting.
Other architects here designed houses to explore the potential of area-developed materials. In fact, they win competitions sponsored by General Electric and The American Gas Co. In collaboration with the Ferro-Enamel Corporation, architect Charles Bacon Rowley designed the world's first porcelain enamel on steel house in a modified international style. Ferro manufactured the siding and built the house over a steel frame in 1932. The house caused national attention but in the end didn't work very well and was not repeated.[10] Because of his long-time use of large expanses of glass overlooking major views, Ernst Payer was an early and enthusiastic proponent of insulated glass ("thermopane"), and his houses and quotations were used by Libby-Owens-Ford in their advertisements for this new product. In 1967, the twelve Sutton Place townhouses designed by William A. Gould & Associates for Alcoa Aluminum were an attempt to find multiple ways of utilizing aluminum in residential construction – structural components as well as windows and siding. While it was seen as part of an enlightened urban renewal plan for Shaker Heights and was successful in itself, the experimental was not repeated.

The area of modern technology and the area's modern housing might be a subject for further study. Has our architectural-industrial collaboration been greater than elsewhere in the country when this was taking place? Why did many of these experiments not continue beyond the prototype?

The Architectural Climate in Cleveland.

Whether Cleveland was home (e.g., Bialosky, Dalton, Droppers, Fleischman, Gaede, Hart, Kelly, Madison, Mayer, Morris) or a place to which they had been recruited (e.g. Clauss, Hays, Hisaka, Payer) or had elected to come (e.g. Little, Toguchi), the architects were challenged by an ultra-conservative environment of the region. This has been verified through the 12 interviews for the 1988 AIA project, 100 Years in Cleveland, from 26 interviews with Cleveland architects for the current (2006-07) Euclid Corridor Project made by Cleveland State University and by written statements by the various architects who designed modern houses between 1930 and 1970 contacted by the writer for this project.

> "What was it like being a modern architect in Cleveland in the 1950s without the backing of family money or connections to the aristocracy or the politicians of the day? Well, it wasn't pleasant; in fact it was rather difficult. How do you practice your art without clients? Or without clients or money? Architecture has always been the domain of the wealthy……. Dilemma: one of the hopes of modern architecture was that it could be the architecture of the people. We once asked Mies van der Rohe how does one make out in architecture? True to his character, he thought for a few moments, puffed on his cigar, then answered: There are three ways - have money, marry money or live long enough. The latter was my only choice, and it did turn out to be true."
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> (Philmore Hart in "Important Architectural Influences from Informal Education", March 2007.)

Robert Gaede's thoughts on how young area architects in the period 1940-70 responded to the then current phenomena of modern architecture are included elsewhere in this publication. In summary he describes an exciting moment to share with peers and to offer our local citizens "a certain new age sustained by a fresh approach to the design of public and private buildings…." Yet a time when an architect may have had to be content with unbuilt projects or exhibition drawings, the "coincidence of a willing client and open site without overbearing constraints was a delirious moment." (Robert Gaede essay, February 2007)

We know that John Rideout, needing an architect for his planned developments, recruited Ernst Payer. Don Hisaka was recruited by Dalton-Dalton to be their Director Of Design, and thought that the very lack of modern architecture positioned us as a city ready to take it on. "In the early 60s, there was a large void of good modern architecture in Cleveland, which presented real opportunities for architects." In discussion, he remarks that we

never really took it on! [11] Bob Little made it his passion, but he really focused on the cadre of friends he came to know in the development of his residential vision.

The famous architects Richard Neutra (1953) and Marcel Breuer (1960) were each commissioned to design one house for a client captivated by other buildings they were building here. Neutra thought it would bring him more clients here; it didn't.

Frank Lloyd Wright, the most widely known of the three, influenced a number of regional architects. Of the twelve Frank Lloyd Wright houses in Ohio, three are in this region: Oberlin (1948) - a redwood and red brick L-shaped *"Usonian" home; North Madison (1950) - a long I-plan made of stone with a glass façade facing Lake Erie; and Willoughby Hills (1953) - a concrete-block and wood two-story house on 30 wooded acres facing the Chagrin River. They are each listed on the National Register and have been well preserved. Each represents a different style, has an interesting set of stories surrounding its commissioning and designing - how many students of FLW participated, what it was REALLY like to build, and what is life like in a FLW house and what are its deficits? All of homes here by these famous architects reflect their distinguished careers, but are not among their notable works.

> * "Usonian" is a name coined by Frank Lloyd Wright to signify a concept of modest and affordable one-story homes utilizing radiant-heated concrete floor slabs, masonry cores and wood construction, the first of which was built in 1939.

Fighting City Hall.

A statement to the City of Cleveland Heights from Robert Little represents perhaps the most eloquent position paper on the virtues of mixing housing types in traditional neighborhoods. This was written to assist the owner in a lawsuit to allow their house to be built.

> From a City Design point of view, the question is how to protect, develop, and renew older residential neighborhoods. The answer to these questions seems to me to be that older neighborhoods need to be radically redesigned for new uses, recognizing the benefits of backyard-living, streetside privacy, and group planning rather than individual chaos. Architecturally, the main question is whether a small house, with fenced –in back-yard privacy, can fit with a street of older houses of varied sizes, styles and character. I believe that present-day architecture blends successfully with old architecture when both are well designed, blends unsuccessfully when either are badly designed. When people ask me if a good modern house doesn't look funny with all those Tudor, colonial and Gothic Ranch types, I sometimes answer, "No, it doesn't, they do. Lastly, from a human point of view, the main question seems to be how to bring a richer and more rewarding life to people. Architecture is the profession of housing this richer life, and it demands the best imagination, the clearest

thinking, and the broadest understanding by Architects and the Public alike. It also demands the courage of people to do new things, and to fight intolerance, narrow-mindedness, insularity and ignorance. Such people were our clients in the case of this little house. We, and anyone else who is looking for present-day housing in the Cleveland area owe (them) a vote of thanks."

Statement on the Frampton-Hewett house
Robert A. Little
December 16, 1957

Note: the owners won their law-suit.

Robert Little, Jerry Weiss (1955), Jack Bialosky (1958), William Morris 1954) - as well as almost everyone else before them (and some to this day) - fought the early battles with city halls over modern design in a traditional context and, in the case of Shaker Heights, over deed restrictions. They had to be articulate and persistent. Jack Bialosky's series of Shaker Heights homes, each one successively ratcheting up the components of modernism, slowly succeeded in breaking down the barriers against contemporary residential architecture in the city. Those architects who followed have given Jack credit for fighting the battle for them which then allowed them to design in more adventurous ways. When Fred Toguchi (1964), William Morris (1960s) and Don Hisaka (1964) built in the Heights area a decade later, their work passed the review committees with less trouble.

Cleveland Heights, as we have seen, had from the beginning accepted modernism, as evidenced by the Byers Hays Derbyshire Rd. twin houses and Harold Burdick's own house. It is therefore not surprising that Jerry Weiss's skills in matters of design and context and the logic of a new planning concept would win the day some thirty years later over proposed alternate uses for the large 5-acre Briggs Estate (designed by Charles Schweinfurth in 1910) at Coventry between Edgehill and Overlook Roads. Proposed conversion of the mansion to a convent or its demolition for construction of a multi-family apartment building were rejected by the city as inappropriate. Jerry, with a group of university professors as his clients, proposed the first condominium development in the city for the site, to be composed of four 4-unit buildings (each to approximate the size of a typical residence in the area) plus the retainage of the outbuildings, swimming pool complex and the perimeter fencing. The project required the city to adopt condominium zoning, which was after a bitter fight approved by the community by a healthy majority. The project, whose final design was developed in partnership with Robert Blatchford, went on to win a number of awards.

Living in a Modern House.

The Rosenfeld family discussed their experience with Fred Toguchi when he designed their Shaker Heights home. They have said in articles about the house:

> "I never had a moment in 15 years that I didn't love this house. I drive in the driveway and think isn't this the most beautiful house? I couldn't ask for more."

From their recollections:

> "Fred visited the family; the children were six, eight, eleven and thirteen. They all liked him. He asked that people keep a diary independently of what they would like or how they would like to live 1) in his or her bedroom 2) outside on the property. The family spent about two weeks making notes that Fred collected and read and clarified. Sometime later, he came back with preliminary drawings. Everyone realized they had been heard…. The entire process was a work of joy and living in the house was not less so.

> "He designed the entire house – furniture and all, giving it a completely unified fee. All the furniture …was designed by Fred and built into the wall. …..The theme of floating was also throughout—the ceilings not touching the walls, area rugs downstairs so they floated on the hardwood floors, steps that floated instead of the traditional staircase, even the light in the dining room floating across the ceiling."
>
> Rosenfeld family (August, 2006)

Ted Welles commissioned a piece of sculpture that sits in the yard of his Toguchi house in Pepper Pike in memory of the architect.

> "The house itself is a flow of spaces formed by cedar, fir and maple on the floors, walls and ceilings. These spaces are formed by three units of buildings connected and stepping down the hillside. The major living and sleeping spaces are thrust into the trees for the most intimate relationship with nature……All in all the object was to achieve a quiet statement of living in the woods." (Fred Toguchi, statement about this house, 1964)

The Amasa Ford family wrote about working with John Terrence Kelly on their Chagrin Falls area house now inhabited by their son.

> "I remember vividly why we chose John. We went to the architect first. We met him at the lot ….and he showed us his scrapbook of photographs of houses he had built. Soon after we met John on the land and heard him gasp at the beauty of the land…..he urged us to build back at the highpoint so we could look at it…..Throughout the building process, we never had a cross word with one another. We lived in the house with our three boys for twenty years imbedded among the beautiful trees…..We appreciated the success of this creative design particularly on winter evenings when we could turn on the outdoor lights, dim those indoors and sit by the fire, right in the midst of Robert Frost's snowy woods. It was a great and unforgettable experience." (Daisy and Amasa Ford) …

Architectural Forum of July-August, 1969 devoted four pages to the residence of Don Hisaka that is the only national AIA Honor Award winner in the Cleveland area. It was also featured in the Fortune Magazine article "When an Architect Builds for Himself." (November, 1971). This home and his vacation house for Agnes (Saalfield) Gund and her family in Peninsula have been internationally published. The Architectural Forum noted:

> "Even though the neighbors cannot look into Hisaka's court, they can tell it is there, and perhaps they realize that the scheme of additive units around a court solves some of the basic problems of housing in the suburban setting. It shows one way to enjoy private outdoor living space and large glass areas—without living ewither in a goldfish bowl or behind a stockade."

Some of the most graceful and eloquent modern houses in the area are by William Morris, whose career has been devoted to designing homes - a couple dozen between 1954 and 1968. He has bridged the Chagrin River flood plain and built on tight hillside sites in So. Euclid. His home for the Stanley Meisels in Pepper Pike, where the front hangs over a stream was the only home included in an AIA Exhibit at the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1964. The present owner met Morris for the first time during our research. The Meisels commissioned a picture of this house from artist Bruce McCombe long after they had moved to commemorate their life there. From 1968 to the present, most of the homes in the original planned community of Walden in Aurora have been Morris' designs. That community concept, with developer Bonnie and Manny Barenholz, shows the trend towards bigger and greater complexity that starts to take hold in the 1970s. Think 1,500 homes, golf courses, sports and meeting facilities, clubhouses and restaurants. Morris takes great pains to consider scale and context in the design of his houses. For a house in Shaker Heights, he drew a 10-feet long rendered elevation of that side of the street where the house was to go so he would get it right!

The Influences on Cleveland's Architects

Many of Cleveland's modern residential architects had impressive training at the nation's top schools of architecture: Harvard, Yale, Illinois Institute of Technology and Cornell among others which means that they have come into contact there with many of the major influences on modern architectural theory such as Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe. In addition, contact with the works of or study with Frank Lloyd Wright, George Howe, Percival Goodman, Alvar Aalto and Alden Dow helped mold their architectural psyches. Many combined education at those schools with their experience here at Case Western Reserve University. Several have said in their taped interviews or in their essays on their careers that the greatest influences have been here. They have specifically honored J. Byers Hays, Robert Little and Fred Toguchi as mentors, and their work at the firm of Outcalt-Guenther-Rode-Bonebrake, where at one time John Terence Kelly, Fred Toguchi, Philmore Hart and Richard Cowan worked together. There they learned the business of architecture, function as a form giver, and the importance of natural light in architectural design.

From Robert Little:

> "It is difficult today to realize the character and depth of belief of the early modern architects during the nineteen thirties, forties and fifties. Modern architecture was a revolution – literally a turning about. Modern architecture was also a consuming faith, and its followers were frankly evangelists – with all the zeal, and some of the intolerance. There was a reason for this, however, for something had happened for the first time in 400 years. For centuries , architects had been cribbing ideas from the ancient temples, Renaissance palaces, and Cotswold cottages. Decorous America in 1945 was living in coy-book colonial and half-timbered houses, with overhead button-operated garage doors, and bell-ringing washer-dryers.
>
> "Then in the first decades of this century (20th) the revolution started. Frank Lloyd Wright, with the unique astronomical brilliance of a "Supergiant star", with the unalterable convictions of a genius, and a full generation in advance of his nearest follower, developed the essential philosophy and forms of the new architecture. Wright, during his long career, produced single handedly, almost all of the innovations of Modern architecture – use of natural materials, non-symmetry, open space between rooms, strips of glass, indirect lighting, great overhanging roofs, and a sense of the relative size and mood of the buildings, inside and out – what the architects call "Scale". No without battles, but controlled totally by his own convictions ....Wright produced a level of artistry and originality in architecture which has not been duplicated, and which seems to destine him to be the only architect who will be universally remembered since Michelangelo.
>
> "Wright, the Supergiant, was followed in time and comparative stature by three architect Giants, Mies van der Rohe, who saw architecture as Science, Corbusier who saw it as Art, and Gropius who saw it as Sociology. Wright had seen architecture as all three – instinctively and totally." [12.]

More informally, one learns the stories of William Morris becoming "hooked" on architecture while visiting Frank Lloyd Wright's "Falling Water" at age ten while it was being built, or doing the drawings for John Terence Kelly's first Elyria house and of Richard Cowan laying the bricks for the Frank Lloyd Wright house for the Staleys, that have surfaced through our request for genealogies. There are many. It will take more time to get all of the architects lined up, if anyone ever can, but it is obvious that as young job captains or designers, they learned a lot on the job and from one another. Some became friends and formed partnerships. At Michael Kane and Associates (1953), Philmore Hart worked with Jerry Weiss, the Associate, and they "became close friends discussing architecture, art, design, interior design, dance, theater, Mies, Wright and eventually became partners." They were students at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago at the same time and come from the same educational influences. A residence

designed by Jerry for the Kane office became the prototype for their Westwood Park homes.

"I had the good fortune of being the job captain for many of Fred Toguchi's projects….. When Fred started his own firm, I joined him as a principal Associate (1961-68) with responsibilities as job captain for contract documents, specifications, field administration, and general office management responsibilities. This was truly the most meaningful and rewarding period of my early architectural career. The main reason was my good fortune to be with the most principled, talented, trustworthy architect with whom I have been associated. I am certain this sentiment is shared by the entire community……". [13]

Robert Blatchford's career sums up the sense of this period. "Being in the right place at the right time is a real gift; much of my life has been blessed this way, as well as by always having supportive mentors." He started at the WRU School of Architecture in 1952 just after Mies van der Rohe's assistant George Danforth became director, apprenticed with Outcalt-Gunther, Joseph Ceruti and in particular, Ernst Payer in the summer of 1954. His studied the McVey house on Pepper Ridge Rd. in depth as an assignment, and became obsessed with the work of Robert Little with whom he was determined to work, which he did shortly after graduating. He liked the work of Phil Hart and Jerry Weiss, who came from their Miesian and Moholy-Nagy graduate work in Chicago, and worked with Hart and Weiss, joining in partnership with Jerry Weiss when the Hart-Weiss partnership ended.

Bob is the "insider" –thoroughly knowledgeable in all ways about this exciting modern period in Cleveland's architectural history. He has served as an informal mentor for this project - delivering photographs, anecdotes, drawings, papers and expertise from the beginning. We are grateful for his involvement.

It is happenstance, but not surprising, that a dozen Cleveland Arts Prize winners in Architecture have been involved in either providing advice to the curatorial team or providing the examples of the housing exhibited in the Cleveland Artists Foundation "Cleveland Goes Modern" exhibit. Some architects represented are obviously no longer living. Of the houses considered for this period of discovery and exploration, almost all have won state AIA design awards, or have appeared on the covers of House and Home, Better Homes and Gardens or LIFE magazine, or have been highlighted and honored in Architectural Record, Progressive Architecture, Architectural Forum, and Interiors. They have appeared in exhibits in many countries of the world as well as here at the Cleveland Museum of Art - all of this mostly during the 50s and 60s. This translates to recognition of their quality by their peers both here, nationwide and abroad. Perhaps as important is that Cleveland's major industries such as General Electric through competition or commission have honored several of the group. The attempt of a number of these architects to design for moderate incomes is a considerable contribution and has been acknowledged by the Builders' Associations, developers, and perhaps most significantly, in the popular magazines such as House and Garden. In Better Homes and Garden's September, 1954 far reaching publication there was a cover story and the complete listing of the 100 communities that had built some version of Robert Little's "Home for All America". Who knows how many children have built the dollhouse from the plans designed by Robert

Little, which appeared in Womans' Day in 1956. A local mark of recognition was the fact that many were selected to design the "model" home for the annual Home and Flower exhibition where the community remembers their creative expression.

What about the architect's feelings during his lifetime as changes have taken place in his creations over time? Some good houses have now been torn down for newer ones, mostly larger and disappointing aesthetically. Are homeowners with money only after media centers, swimming pools, and big lawns? Is bigger better? While many of the homes in this exhibit are generous, big is not a characteristic. And some have been altered almost beyond recognition of the original design. Fortunately, a number of the new owners have engaged sympathetic younger architects in these alterations, so while the original designs and interiors have changed, the new can be complimentary to the bones of the original house.

> "Modernism is itself reaching the gateway to historicism. How we address its relatively few major examples in terms of their survival is the current issue. ....A new respect for the style has emerged. That its influence on many aspects of our present, particularly our furnishings, and our many variations of the movement in the arena of commercial and industrial building has altogether left a lasting footprint upon the American landscape and the urban scene." [14]

Postscript

The choice to explore and begin the study of the houses of the period 1930 – 1970 has proved fortuitous. Original residents are dwindling to a handful, many architects are in their eighties and some houses are being demolished for new development. To capture the histories and recollections of those who made it happen must happen now before these resources are lost to us. We are privileged to be able to honor those pioneers in the first exhibit focused on this region's architects in decades. [15] In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the American Institute of Architects nationally, the Cleveland Artists Foundation (CAF) has begun the research and a discussion that will expand in the next years. The architecture students of the Kent State University School of Architecture and Environmental Design (KSU SAED) have used what we have found to date in a yearlong course on Modernism. They've been photographing homes, knocking on doors and pleasing surprised owners. Finding the original plans and drawings after more than 50 years remains one of the biggest challenges. Modern architecture faces the same challenges today. But architects continue to explore the meaning of modern—in their own homes and those of excited clients. We will continue to learn together. [16,17]

Programs and house tours accompany the Cleveland Goes Modern Exhibition at The Cleveland Artists Foundation Gallery at Beck Center for the Arts from September 7 - November 24, 2007. People have asked, "What is modern about modern?" and even "What does an architect do that a developer does not?" We trust the exhibition and catalogue will help answer such questions.

Endnotes:

1. *Modern Architecture*, Museum of Modern Art, 1932 *"Historical Note" by Philip Johnson and "The Extent of Modern Architecture" by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock* Reprinted by permission from Modern Architecture C1932 The Museum of Modern Art, New York. pg 29.
2. Ibid. pg 60.
3. Ibid. pg 113.
4. Joseph Ceruti "Recollections of Architects and Architecture in Cleveland", Architronic, v2n1.04 by Joseph Ceruti, pg 1 and 2.
5. Article by Lawrence Wodehouse, paraphrased by Joseph Ceruti -pg 6.
6. Taped discussion between George Dalton and John Bonebrake 2-28-07.
7. "Home in Cellophane" TIME Magazine, April 1935.
8. Taped Madison story 2-28-07
9. Richard N. Campen, of *A Career in Architecture: The Ernst Payer Approach* 1982, gift of the author, spiral bound manuscript, Western Reserve Historical Society. Letter Feb 4, 2006 from Helen Campen (Mrs Richard N.) regarding her permissions to use "A Career in Architecture: The Ernst Payer Approach' 1982 by Richard N. Campen in any way that was appropriate.
10. Eric Johannesen, *Cleveland Architecture, 1876-1976*, Cleveland, Western Reserve Historical Society, pg 189.
11. Discussion with Don Hisaka by phone, March 2007
12. Robert Little, *Second Love*, 1992, pg 6
13. Richard Cowan Memo, March 2007
14. Robert Gaede February 2007
15. See Cleveland Museum of Art archives for Architecture-related Exhibits at the Cleveland Museum of Art 1916-2003
16. It should be noted that many of the architects were drafted during World War II and took the opportunity to explore the areas of their service and travel to other areas during this period. They credit these experiences for expanding their horizons and perspectives.
17. It should be noted that there are more than 6 dozens houses that were considered over a two and half year span. We KNOW that viewers will ask about the inclusion of some even by the architects whose work are the focus of this exhibit. The discussions will be endless. The challenge continues. Examples of non-inclusion involve houses not recorded by the architect's successor office, no availability of original photographs, and in a very few cases, the desire by a current homeowner not to be included. We were finally persuaded in some cases by the accolades and notices given a home by national publications placing them in the judgment of others who valued their design.

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